



Senator Murkowski co-led the legislation that created the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children. This followed a powerful moment at the 2013 Alaska Federation of Natives Convention, when a group of young people from Tanana, Alaska, courageously shared their experiences with violence, substance abuse, and suicide in their communities, calling for immediate action.

Moved by their testimony, Senator Murkowski, alongside former Senator Heidi Heitkamp, introduced bipartisan legislation to create a commission dedicated to studying and addressing these critical issues. The commission was named in honor of two influential Native leaders: Dr. Walter Soboleff, a revered Tlingit elder and advocate for cultural education, and Alyce Spotted Bear, former Chairwoman of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation.

Charged with conducting a comprehensive study of federal, Tribal, state, and local programs serving Native children, the commission's work culminated in recommendations designed to improve the well-being and opportunities of Native children. The legislation establishing the commission was signed into law in 2016 and has since guided important policy discussions and initiatives through the release of The Way Forward report.

In August 2025, Murkowski released the Native Children's Commission Implementation Act of 2025, a draft legislative package based on the recommendations contained in The Way Forward report. The goal of the draft legislation was to allow for further feedback from Tribes, experts, and agencies.

Following the release, Senator Murkowski held a roundtable in Anchorage, Alaska, titled "The Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children: Examining Draft Legislation Related to The Way Forward Report."

In January 2026, Senator Murkowski held a legislative hearing titled "Justice and Safety for Native Children: Examining Title II of the Draft Native Children's Commission Implementation Act."

Since August 2025, Senator Murkowski and her staff have hosted numerous listening sessions and roundtables with stakeholders across the country to gather additional feedback and consultation.

In May 2026, Senator Murkowski and Senator Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) introduced the Promoting Strong Native Families and Children Act. Provisions of this legislation draw upon the Tribal Family Fairness Act of the 118th Congress as well as Senator Murkowski's draft Native Children's Commission Implementation Act's first title on child welfare issues